

THE FSA NEWS

MAY 1979

COMMUNICATIONS

BY LAURA NEAME.

This is the last newsletter for this year, and I'd like to thank everyone who has helped in the preparation of the newsletters, particularly Sandy Borrowman for her typing, Richard Heyman for his photographic and recording skills, and everyone who has contributed by writing articles.

I'd encourage everyone to come to the Annual General Meeting. This will be the last opportunity for everyone to get together before the fall semester begins.

This newsletter emphasizes PARTICIPATION and the need for F.S.A. members to take an active part in F.S.A. affairs. Kevin shows the dangers involved in entrusting a few people with an important negotiations job again and again. Both Richard and Jean point out ways union members can become involved actively in affairs that concern them directly; showing that the individual is not powerless in the face of management decisions.

You do have the opportunity to become involved and the obligation to make the F.S.A. a strong and successful organization through your participation.

FACULTY & STAFF ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CHILLIWACK RM. 207

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23 1600 (4 pm)

GET INVOLVED.

BE THERE »»»»

NEGOTIATION AFTERTHOUGHTS

by

Kevin Busswood

Negotiations are "successfully" completed for 1979-80. It is important to dwell a moment on what little we have gained. Aside from financial gains which were barely adequate, we gained some input into processes which are central to our life at the College. Winning a "voice" is not the same as winning more money or benefits. There is a good possibility that unless we change our collective attitude towards the union (F.S.A.) and what it represents, that our win will later be turned to defeat. Our pleasure at gaining a voice must be tempered by our awareness that we do not yet know how to use it.

The new contract sets up three major committees: educational leave; technological change; and labour-management. These committees, over the next twelve months, will set policies in place which will affect all of us, our students, and our communities, for some time to come. The issues I hope are obvious; what is problematic is our collective ability to research, argue, and negotiate a resolution to these issues.

For the past four years "union business" has tended to be conducted by the same pool of recycled people. There is a rather touching trust on the part of membership that what the executive or negotiating team recommends must be alright. Except in specific instances where individual interests are trampled upon, there is little evidence of passion or solidarity on many questions. Dare I suggest that the lack of passion and the surfeit of trust represent a tendency by many of us to quietly disdain our status as 'trade union members'. One might suspect that deep in our hearts we are not altogether convinced that we really are, or should be a union. Such fears or concerns are logical, I suppose, given the climate of opinion which exists today; however, the time has come to bring these feelings into the open and deal with them. In other words we must recognize and reconfirm our commitment to unionism within the College system.

The responsibilities which we now have under the contract imply first that we are trade unionists who seek many of the rights and protections of other trade unions; and second, that a trade union has more on its mind than merely wages and benefits. Questions of technological change, educational leave, and labour-management relationships are questions which affect all members of the college community. It seems to me that students and other members of the community are dependant upon us to ensure certain aspects of the integrity of education. People who do not "keep up-to-date", and people who do not question the penetration of education by some kinds of technology, are people who abdicate an important responsibility to themselves and others.

Participation in the committees addressing these questions requires more than the slaughter of some poor soul on the altar of elected representation; participation demands discussion, debate, research, SUPPORT, from all F.S.A. members. We must accept our responsibilities as trade unionists. If we have reservations about these responsibilities or about the forum in which they are located, let us deal with them quickly. The coming year demands much work from all of us. Union work is not selfish work, it is not extra work--union work is an essential component or college life (and death).

SUMMER HOURS AGREEMENT REACHED!

by

Richard Heyman

The awareness of a collective agreement is an essential fact of working life if labour and management are to be a productive unit. A contract settlement is

practically worthless if it is simply forgotten on a back shelf to gather dust until the frenzy of negotiations start up again. A select few have negotiated hard for what

PUT THIS DAY ASIDE:

Sunday August 27.

WE ARE PLANNING A LATE SUMMER PICNIC
ALL FSA Members, spouses and
and children will be
WELCOME.

Dancing, games, barbecue, beer and pop.....
Your chance to get together after the holidays
Relax, meet new faculty and staff. Administration
and the Board will be invited also.

we have won and we must be aware of that.

And yet awareness is not enough. Knowledge of what an agreement says, how it affects the people governed by it - how it affects you - is even more essential. A work place operating with no contract may be well and good but seldom does it work. Indeed, even with a collective agreement problems occur. Through misinterpretation problems and violations of contract take place.

Specifically, I would like to refer to Article 19.1 which concerns summer hours. The Management Group was dictating to us what type of summer schedule we would be allowed to operate under. Violation number One - it is up to the Immediate Supervisor, not the Management Group. Also, there was no discussion or consultation with those who could make the final decision which was violation number Two. The Immediate Supervisor and the Senior Administrator must consult and yet no consultation took place.

In other words, one gets together with his immediate supervisor and together an agreement is reached as to what type of summer hours would both benefit the employee and still take care of the requirements of the department. This is then discussed with the Senior Administrator of the area, he adds his comments and that is that. The Senior Administrator cannot bind staff to a fixed set of hours that he wishes to see implemented, unless, of course, he is also the Immediate Supervisor.

However, Management was confused and mistaken, but we were not. We knew what the Article meant and how it operated. And it is because of this fact that we were able to successfully show that we would not

allow this contract violation to occur.

Through the Agreements Committee we have been able to show the College Managers that they were not following the procedures as laid down in the Agreement. The College is now not only aware of Article 19.1, they now know how it operates and how it affects summer hours.

The Association was formed for this reason. Without the F.S.A. we would not be able to make interpretations. Indeed, there would be nothing to interpret. The Bursar's memo would have been our only contract.

We must not feel smug; we may have won a round but if we do not all do our part, other problems may arise which could cause bad feelings between Employee and Employer.

I hope that for those who have had their doubts about trade unions that this event has served to not only recognize the importance of College Unionism but also that together, with everyone participating we can continue to have satisfactory working conditions as well as equitable wages and benefits.

We all have rights - legal rights - but we must use them - correctly and collectively - if we are to remain a viable association.

Awareness of a Collective Agreement is never enough. We must know why it is there and what it says. If we don't; if we simply roll over and play dead we will have lost a fundamental right - the right to have a voice in the operation of our work place and if we allow that right to be lost we may never get it back again.

AREA REPS - THE START OF THE GRIEVANCE PROCESS

BY JEAN WILLIAMS

This scenario is designed to underline that a complaint to an Area Rep need not precipitate a full scale grievance procedure.

Janet is a secretary in the typing pool of the college. She has been there for two years and is a competent employee. She is a pleasant, willing worker and during the past 3-4 months has found that her workload has become almost overwhelming.

Upon attempting to analyze the situation, Janet recognizes that a large part of her time is spent doing work for one of the executives which would normally be performed by a private secretary.

The job description for her position contains none of these sort of duties, nor is the pay commensurate with that of a private secretary.

Though unwilling to "make waves", Janet decides to talk to her shop steward (Area Rep) about the problem, and together they decide that a good course of action would be a discussion with the supervisor.

It soon becomes apparent during the discussion that a genuine need for reorganization has developed.

The supervisor is able to demonstrate this need to management et voila - problem solved!

Or perhaps...

A discussion with Janet's supervisor takes place (Step 1 of grievance procedure), who finally concedes that the workload is sometimes unbalanced, though initially the supervisor seems to view the complaint as a reflection on her own ability to organize and maintain an equitable workflow in the office.

During the next month some changes are made, in the department, but they prove insufficient.

Janet is thus forced to take her protest further (Step 2 of the grievance procedure - a letter to her supervisor with a copy to the office manager).

A meeting of the office manager, secretarial supervisor and Area Rep now takes place. Janet may attend if she wishes.

It does not seem unlikely that this grievance will be solved at this step since the need for change now seems clear.

While not all issues can be as smoothly resolved as in either of the above cases, Area Reps provide access to advice and assistance in the event of unsatisfactory working conditions for faculty or staff F.S.A. members. Area Reps are the first line of defence and a source of advice on possible contract violations. It is fairer to both the employee and the supervisor if a matter in dispute is dealt with through the Area Rep, and not allowed to fester. The Area Rep is there to help solve work related problems, and in the majority of cases this does not mean a full scale grievance procedure.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PREZ

by Laura Neame and Leslie Panno

Neame: What do you see as the FSA's major accomplishments this year?

Panno: I think it is an accomplishment every year to reach the end of the year having maintained the integrity of our joint Association, with a good working relationship between the faculty and staff, and with a union that is still very much concerned with the individual and his concerns. We have been fortunate this year to have had, on most occasions, a good relationship with the College Board, who handled very reasonably such matters as the Reclassification study, the Principal's evaluation, the issue of hiring non-union carpenters, and this year's contract.

Some of the highlights of the year I could mention are the LRB decision on the inclusion of the four Directors, the implementation of the Reclassification study and the setting up of the Joint Classification Audit Committee, our withdrawal from CFF, Bill 46 (the amendments to the Essential Services Disputes Act), the AUCE strike at SFU, the search for a new President, and our record-setting time in signing this year's contract.

Neame: Do you feel there has been a lack of participation and involvement on the part of FSA members this year?

Panno: I would say yes to that question, but I would qualify my answer by saying that lack of participation is a fact of life in organizations such as unions, and we are not unique in having this problem. It's a little discouraging to see the attendance at general meetings, but I think you just have to assume that the members are satisfied with the Executive's day-to-day running of the Association, and they will only participate when some issue which is really important to them comes up.

Neame: Do you see any solutions to this problem?

Panno: I think the Executive could try to make the union more visible by increasing the informal methods of communication and by making the members more aware of the role it plays in day-to-day affairs. We are now paying for release time for certain Executive positions, and we should now be able, as a result of the new contract, to hold Executive meetings during regular working hours so that staff members can more easily attend. Possibly these two measures will encourage members to participate more by taking a position on the Executive. In the light

of our small numbers, it is essential that new people be willing to help with the responsibilities of running the union.

Neame:What do you see as some of the important tasks of next year's Executive?

Panno:I think we are moving towards more clearly defined roles for some of our committees, so that members will know where to go to solve a problem they may have or even just to get information. An area which needs attention next year is the new Grievance Committee (formerly the Membership Committee). The role of the area reps needs to be specified, educational workshops should be held, and the membership should be more clearly informed about the steps they should follow and the correct people to consult should they have a grievance.

There are also three new committees set up by the Collective Agreement. Two of these, the Tech Change Committee and the Leaves Committee, will complete a defined task this year, and the third, the Labour-Management Committee, will be an ongoing Committee.

I think we can expect some movement on the part of the provincial government this year towards a tighter control over community colleges, and our new Executive should keep itself informed of these developments and be prepared to respond if necessary. Of course, we are also going to have a new President who will need to be educated by the Executive.